

Matt. chap. 16. v. 26. "For what is a Man Profited, if he shall Gain the whole World and Lose his own Soul?"

This was the declaration of Christ to his disciples, when they seemed to fear the troubles of the world, and not to be so true to his interest as he wished. "If any man," says he, "would come after me, and follow me," into the next world, where I am on the eve of going; "let him Deny himself;" not set his heart on the things of this life, or fear even death in a good cause; but let him "take up his cross," and be patient under afflictions, as I have been; "for whosoever will save his life shall Lose it, and whosoever will lose his life, for my sake, shall Find it;"---"for what is a man Profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" or what can be put in competition with the soul?---"What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?---Remember,---whatever are your sufferings Now; the Son of man shall hereafter come, with his angels, in the glory of the Father," and then he "will reward every man according to his works."

This is a fair and just paraphrase of the passage from whence the text is taken. By the Soul is meant that divine spirit which God gave to man at his creation, and which he has decreed to be Immortal, and to live for ever in the regions of



Eternity; but to be happy or unhappy in those regions, according as the body, to which it is united, shall have conducted itself in This life, which is, as it were, a state of probation for the Next.

Man has thus both a Terrestrial and Celestial form, made to partake the happiness both of earth and heaven: that is to say, he hath both a body and a soul, the first more adapted to Corporeal pleasures; the second, to Incorporeal. One is to seek its happiness in This life; the other, in the life to Come. The Body, as the Mortal part of him, partakes, with other sublunary things of the common vicissitudes of nature, is born, grows, comes to maturity, and dies: the Soul is the Immortal part of him, that after death partakes of eternity, and will live for ever.

To enter into the union of soul and body, or the reasons that induced our Creator to form us thus, is no part of our present enquiry; it is sufficient for us to know that we are placed here, as in a state of trial, destined to be punished or rewarded in a future life, according as we have behaved ourselves in this. What that life is, we have heard again and again. Our Saviour tells us that, on the day of resurrection, the Righteous will be received into Heaven; but the Wicked will be cast down into Hell. This last expression, by what goes before the text, and what follows it, we are justified in saying, is what our Saviour means to infer by the Loss of the Soul; that is to say, the forfeiture of that eternal life which good Christians are taught to hope for and expect, through His sufferings, His death and mediation.

As I wish to convince my hearers, if possible, of the truth of those doctrines I advance; it may be necessary to say some



thing of the certainty of a future life: for though many Pagan philosophers, before Jesus Christ appeared, were satisfied in their own minds that, from the disproportionate distribution of happiness in This life, there must be some future state; where the good, who suffer here, will be rewarded; yet, I am sorry to observe, there are men who profess themselves Christians, and yet declare that they disbelieve it.

A thinking man must naturally suppose that the all-wise and beneficent Creator would not be so unjust as to punish the good in this world, if he had not some happiness in reserve for them in another; he must also imagine, that God would not give existence to so many millions of inhabitants, and leave them wholly to themselves. If he ordained man to live a Hundred years, why may he not ordain him to live for Ever, and partake hereafter of Eternity with himself?---We are sensible that he has done many wonderful things past human conception and comprehension; why then should we doubt of others?---If we admit that God Created the world, why may he not Govern it? If he took upon him to lead, as it were, our ancestors by the hand; why should we doubt his further interference and intercourse with man, through the person of our Saviour? The Christian world are taught to believe in the existence of Christ, and of his being on earth eighteen hundred years ago; and even the Mahometans, who deny his Divinity, still admit that such a person was then living, and that he was a prophet sent from God.---Conceiving him in this last character alone, if we duly reflect on the miracles he performed, on his prophecies that have been fulfilled, particularly that of



the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews; if we believe in this which is corroborated by ancient histories; and if we believe in His resurrection, we must believe him to be more than man, and, with equal reason, we may believe his prophecy of Our Resurrection at the last day. This holy personage then, whether we suppose him to be the Deity under human form, or only a prophetic messenger from Heaven, carried about him such indisputable marks of Divine mission as could not be controverted. Now we have his express declaration that, in some future age of the world, he will descend again on earth; that he will appear in the clouds in full glory, attended with his angels, and will then reward every man according to his deserts. His words are, as recorded in the 26th Chapter of St. Matthew, that "all nations shall be then gathered before him, whom he will divide according to their merits; and that the Wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into life eternal."

Bid him who professes to disbelieve this, speak blasphemy, and defy the power of Heaven, to punish him;---and will he Dare to do it? No; he has a dread that acknowledges an avenging God, and the sacred truths of Christianity, and tells us, at once, that his tongue is a traitor to his heart.

What says St. Paul to this?---Read his 15th Chapter to the Corinthians. He declares the Certainty of a future state from the resurrection of Christ. But who, may the disbeliever say, was St. Paul?---He was one of our Saviour's apostles, sent by him to preach and declare the doctrines of Christianity; and that he might obtain credit for what he said, he enabled him to work



miracles, as he himself had done; this St. Paul tells us, that as the seed dies and is buried in the ground, and rises again in the form of a fresh plant, so the bodies of men will rise again after death---“ At the last trump the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and this mortal shall put on immortality.” They which are then alive, “ shall be caught up in the clouds, together with them who rise from the dead, to meet the Lord in the air.” And of the existence of St. Paul, who was a Roman citizen, and the miracles he wrought, we have the concurrent testimony of many historians, so that the history of this apostle is as credible and as well authenticated as that of any of the Roman Emperors.

Where is the man then, in his senses, that, knowing this will say, There is no future state? Was he to express even a Doubt of it, I would not believe him---In this future state the wicked and impenitent will “ lose his soul;” that is, be eternally punished,---but, “ he that turneth away from his wickedness, and doth that which is lawful and right, shall save his soul alive.”

Though we are told that God formed man for his Own glory; yet, with a spirit of philanthropy, he made him capable of enjoying the good things he set before him, restraining him only from such as are injurious to his nature; but, in giving him Appetites to long for what he saw, and Senses to enjoy it, he also gave him an Understanding to discern and judge, how far it is conducive to his Worldly happiness, and leaves him to indulge in it or not, as he thinks it prudent and proper. The great question then upon the words before us is, Whether it be expedient to gratify our desires in all that our hearts can wish, at the expence



of the breach of that law, which God Has imposed upon mankind; which is, To fear and worship him; be true to the state, and love one another with brotherly affection. "Love the brotherhood, (says St. Peter,) fear God, and honour the king." Whatever enjoyments of life tend to the subversion of these great principles, they are ruinous to our souls. The law he has given us, as a rule of conduct, is plain before us; and, if we consult our consciences, we cannot err; he has planted this monitor in our breasts, to guide us in all we do; and, if we act so, that, on reflection, our consciences do not upbraid us, Then, have we nothing to dread.

Let us consider now whether the worldly man acts or not, according to the dictates of his own conscience; that is to say, whether, on serious reflection, he can approve of all he does. I am aware that there are none of us so perfect, but must, at times, condemn our own actions. I mean not to examine the worldling too strictly, but merely as to his general line of conduct.

Can he then, as a Youth, a minor, under the controul of his parents, lay his hand upon his heart, and say, that he acts Rightly, that is, consistent with the laws of his Maker, when he disturbs the peace and quiet of those who gave him birth, and who are anxious for his happiness, and does not "obey his parents which is good before God?"---Can he think he acts Right, when he wounds their peace by undutiful behaviour, by headstrong and ungovernable conduct; by taking pains to deceive them; by returning their fostering care with ingratitude and impiety; by dissipating their substance, and disgracing their family; by secretly wishing for their deaths, that he may become master of



their property; by counteracting their best measures for his welfare, and "bringing down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave?"---Little doth he consider how sharper than a serpents tooth it is, to have a Thankless child!

Can he, as the Father of a family, be courteous, be pleasant, and affable Abroad, and be a very tyrant when at Home?---Can he, at his leisure, lavish his substance in the indulgence of his Own gratifications, and neglect those he is bound by all the ties of nature and duty to succour and protect, and "not provoke to anger lest they be discouraged?"---Can he listen to the little blandishments of his infant family, at the moment perhaps he is going forth to beggar them?---Can he neglect or be unfaithful to the partner of his bosom; she who divides and shares his cares and sorrows; she whom, in gratitude and honour, he ought to consider and comfort as his second Self, "to love and not be bitter against her?"---Can he, I say, leaving, perhaps, his little ones pining and half famished, go calmly to the house of riot and intemperance, wallow in scenes of debauchery; and returning home, receive their tender caresses, knowing he has been doing them an injury?---Can he call This acting Right; or, on serious reflection, can he approve his own conduct?---No; "such a man, (says St. Paul,) is worse than an infidel."

Can he, as a Brother, and perchance as an Elder one, who has shared the better part of his father's fortune, if not almost the whole, under an idea that he should be the surviving parent and patron of his younger brethren;---Can he dissipate that fortune in the aggrandisement of a name, and leave those who have been taught to look up to him for assistance and protection,



to struggle, as they can, through a selfish world?---Can he call This Right, or will he, on his pillow, sleep undisturbed by self-reproach?---No; "He that hateth his brother, (says St. John,) is a Murderer," and a murderer surely has no quiet.

Can he, as a Master, brow-beat his fellow-creatures, and be unkind to those whose study is to please and to serve him, and whom perhaps God, with equal privileges of nature and religion, has not blessed with an equality of this world's goods?---Can he be tyrannical, and withhold the wages of such men, and thus add oppression to their misfortunes?---Can he call Such conduct Right, and will his conscience tell him that in This he does no wrong?---"Masters, (says St. Paul,) give unto your servants that which is just and equal, forbearing threatening, knowing also that you have a Master in heaven."

Can he, as a Servant, bound by all laws both human and divine, to obedience and fidelity, deceive, injure, and betray his master, to whom he owes his support and maintenance?---Can he clandestinely rob him, and his conscience not upbraid him for the act? "Servants, (says St. Paul,) obey your masters in all things; not with eye service, but in singleness of heart, fearing God."

Can he, as a Citizen, or a Member of Society, trick and over-reach his fellow-subjects? Can he withhold his charity from those who have a claim upon him, when his Redeemer says, "Depart from me, ye Cursed, for you have not given unto the poor?" Can he defraud the state that protects him, and serpent-like bite the very breast that cherishes him? Can he be rebellious, and lay plots to subvert that government he has sworn to obey?



Can he, I say, do This and not shudder at the treachery he is guilty of? "Whosoever resisteth the higher powers, (says St. Paul,) resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation."

In short, Can he, as a Christian, violate the laws of his religion!---Can he fly in the face of his Maker and Redeemer, and, Judas-like, deny his very God?---Can he break the sabbath, profane the church, refrain from worship, set God's laws at defiance, and dare his Creator's vengeance?---Can he call This Right?---Does not his conscience smite him, and make him dread the daily danger he is in, that of being suddenly called to the bar of future Judgment, and finally losing his own soul?---Can he go on thus boldly sinning, regardless of the consequences?---Can he Commend himself, or think, that in so doing, he is acting Right?---

And yet, we see such men every day.---We see them tripping gaily on, as if their consciences told them that they were "void of offence both towards God and towards man."---We see them in every circle of dissipation, and in every house of pleasure; partaking of the mirth, thoughtless of any thing that may happen to them hereafter. Like the woman in the Proverbs, "They eat and wipe their mouths, and say they have done no wickedness."---I have not patience with such men.---I will admit the Force of Temptation; I will admit the Prevalence of Habit; I will admit the Intoxication of Pleasures; and the Frailty of human Nature; but I will not admit, but that the most giddy and thoughtless man has, at times, a moment of reflection. Cloyed perhaps with pleasure; fatigued with enjoyment; rising  
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from his bed after a night of intemperance; jaded and sickened with the riot of the preceding day, Conscience, if even not consulted, will now and then break in upon the soul, and make its upbraidings heard. The man, in spite of himself, must and will Reflect; and then, What are his reflections but, with Solomon, that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit.---I sought for pleasure but have not found it.---I am unwell; my head aches, and what is worse, my Heart aches."---These may not be his Words, but, my life for it, they are his Thoughts;---and yet, with those bitter reflections, he rises for the day, puts on his folly with his cloaths, his qualms go off, his thoughtlessness returns, and he also returns to his pleasurable drudgery, as before; to the same giddy and fatiguing round of sin and dissipation.

But, let him call it Pleasure;---let him call it Happiness:---If he considers at what expence it is procured, it must take off from its zest---Setting aside any future consideration of a world to come; I appeal to himself, whether, after he has revelled in what he deems Delight, he has found his mind more at ease, than before he partook of the enjoyment?---No;---the more he indulges in what he calls Pleasure, the more jaded and tired he is; it is "sweet as honey in the mouth, but bitter (as St. John says,) in the belly." Solomon may well call it "vanity and vexation of spirit." But let a man "pursue that which is lawful and right;" that which his heart approves, and which his conscience does not condemn, and his pleasures will be lasting and sweet. Let the Voluptuary riot in the enjoyment of his appetites; let him be absorbed in sensual delights: let the Covetous man wallow in envied wealth; let there be no end to his riches: let the Ambitious



man be hoisted to the very summit of grandeur; let the star blaze upon his breast, and the coronet glitter round his temples:--let the Vain-glorious man be swelled with public breath, and blown up with popular applause; let him be courted by the multitude, and worshipped by the rabble:---Nay, let the victorious Warrior, though trampling in blood, be wreathed with laurels; let him return in triumph, amid the loud and grateful acclamations of his countrymen:---let each enjoy all that his heart desires, and he will not have Half that pleasure that arises in the breast, that heart-felt enjoyment, the result of one good and Righteous action. And why?--In this Fancied happiness there is something within that stings him, and tells him he has acted wrong. His motives were not Pure: but in the discharge of our moral duties, in the performance of actions truly virtuous and religious, we have a self-approving monitor.---Conscience, that voice of the Almighty, hailing us with a "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord!"

This is True happiness, and within the reach of every one. It is not the result of health, of wealth, of rank, or public acclamation; but the testimony of a rewarding Conscience, a conviction in our minds of having done our duty to God and to our neighbour, of being a Dutiful child, a Tender parent, an Affectionate husband and brother, a Kind master, a Faithful servant, a Good citizen, a Loyal subject, and a Sincere Christian; and as such, entitled to the promises of everlasting happiness.

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